

from about 1588, a regular pamphlet bombardment, under the *nom-de-guevre* of Martin Marprelate. They made very liberal use of the weapon of abuse as well as of ridicule, and such slashing philippics as " An Epistle to the Terrible Priests of the Confocation House," " Ha' ye any Work for the Cooper ?" and " An Epitome of the First Book of Dr Bridges," teem with bitter and coarse personalities. Dignified prelates like the archbishop and the Bishops of London and Winchester, were upbraided, befooled, cursed, vituperated with an animus of language that smacked of the low pot-house politician. Controversialists like Cartwright and Travers had been dogmatic enough, but they were decent. Martin Marprelate simply reviled at large, and exhausted the resources of the English language in the application of abusive epithets to his right reverend persecutors. They are " a swinish rabble," " most covetous, wretched priests," "proud, popish, presumptuous, profane, paultrie, pestilent, and pernicious prelates," "pettie anti-Christes," " knaves and dunces," " impudent, shameless, and wainscote-faced bishops," "vickers of hell," "monstrous and ungodly wretches." Non-residents are " thieves and foul murtherers before God." Many of the rank and file of the non-Puritan clergy are "swine, dumbe dogs, lewd livers, thieves, murtherers, adulterers, drunkards, cormorants, rascals, ignorant and atheistical dolts." With these ravings Martin mingled some humour, and a great deal of argumentation on the burning ecclesiastical questions of the hour.

Tremendous indignation has been expended on his shrewish style by both contemporary and later writers. It is far from being to our taste, but it is no worse than that of Luther in his angry moods, or of Luther's antagonists. To argue forcibly on theological questions in this century was indeed too often to throw mud of a very unsavoury character —to abuse the person as well as attack the opinions of your antagonist. Martin took full advantage of this liberty of theological polemics, but it should be remembered that a merciless persecution had rasped the feelings of these suffering Puritans, and that indulgence in personal vilification was not all on one side. He might, in fact, have learned the art from some of the judges of the High Commission itself, who sought often enough to intimidate their victims with opprobrious epithets.